

THE ISSUES

Newsletter

Welcome to the third installment of MassHabitat. This newsletter is distributed annually in the Summer. If you would like to showcase your project or see a specific issue highlighted in the newsletter please contact the LIP Coordinator at 508-389-6313.

Focus

During the third successful round of grants our focus continued to be on early successional habitat such as grasslands and scrub/shrub land, shorebird breeding areas, NHESP priority natural communities and areas with Species-at-risk.

Feature Article:

Currently, LIP is funding many projects in Massachusetts working on early successional sites to benefit the American woodcock. These project consist of restoring habitat through the removal of invasive plants and the removal of trees to turn back the clock on succession. Please see page 2 for more information about woodcock and their natural habitat in Massachusetts.

Faces of Conservation

In the this years Newsletter we spoke with Jon Liland. He is currently working under a LIP grant and tells us about his project and how he hosted a Coverts training field trip.

2008 LIP Application Deadline

This years grant application period will be opened on October 26th 2007. Please refer to the webpage often for updated application materials and assistance.

MA LIP Receives Another Federal LIP Grant.

On July 19th 2007, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced nearly \$13 million in competitive funding for 17 State fish and wildlife agencies under the Landowner Incentive Program. The **Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife** will receive \$849,500 to continue to provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners through the Landowner Incentive Program. The Division will use this new funding exclusively to continue a program that creates, manages and restores habitat for species identified as at-risk in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS). To date, MassWildlife's Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) has restored over 7100-acres and partnered with 108 landowners on projects to benefit species at risk. LIP has been a large success in Massachusetts. This was evident to the USFWS as Massachusetts ranked in the top ten proposals for funding in the country. LIP will help to implement the Massachusetts CWCS by supporting habitat management on private lands.

Summary of the 2007-2008 Partnership with Private Landowners

This year MassWildlife's Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) received **43** applications for Species-at-risk habitat improvement/restoration on private lands. Of these 43 applications, **39** were selected for funding in FY2008. MassWildlife will be partnering with these private landowners on about **2463**-acres. This will create over 3750-acres of total habitat. Landowner are being reimbursed about **\$765,000** across the state for the habitat work. (*cont. on page 2*)



MASSACHUSETTS
WILDLIFE
Magazine



MASSACHUSETTS WILDLIFE

magazine is a quarterly publication packed with award-winning articles and photos on the environment, conservation, fishing, hunting, natural history and just about everything relating to the outdoors in Massachusetts. Get all the inside information on wildlife and fisheries management, endangered species restoration programs, critical habitat protection and the outstanding people who are working to conserve our outdoor resources.

http://www.mass.gov/dfwel/dfw/publications/mwmag/mwmag_home.htm

LIP Landowner Recieves Award

Kevin and Cynthia Weir of Poverty Mountain Farm in Amherst, who were featured in last year's Faces of Conservation, were awarded a Certificate of Recognition by the President of the New England Chapter of The Wildlife Society at this year's annual Fish and Wildlife Conference held in Mystic, CT.

This award is given to someone that is outside the profession that has made noteworthy contributions to wildlife conservation



Feature Article on LIP species:

American Woodcock



American Woodcock *Scolopax minor*

Habitats: Early Successional Forest

Conservation Concern: Species-at-risk

Species Description

The American woodcock is a compact bird weighing between 116-219 g however females on average are larger than males. Males and females are similar in appearance. Plumage is mottled with brown, buff and gray to camouflage against the forest floor. A long bill measuring 5.9-7.8 cm is used to probe for earthworms. The head has 3 dark transverse bars on the crown and large eyes that are set toward the back of the head. **Distribution and Abundance**

There are 32 recent, documented occurrences of the Grasshopper Sparrow in Massachusetts (NHESP database, accessed December, 2004).

Habitat Description

Old farms reverting to forest generally provide optimum habitat for woodcock. Singing grounds and roost sites are situated in forest openings, old pastures, brushy fields, or bogs. Nests are generally found close by in young open woodlands. Daytime feeding habitat includes areas with poorly drained soils such as alder swales near old fields or second-growth hardwoods mixed with aspen, birch and alder with rich, moist soils near ponds, streams, or wet areas. **Threats**

Loss of appropriate habitat to land development, changes in agricultural practices (early harvesting and fewer fallow fields), and natural succession appear to be the primary factors in this species' decline. Openings created by forest fires once provided habitat, but these are now rare.

Threats:

Woodcock populations have been declining due to loss of suitable habitat due to forest succession and development. Encouraging small clearcuts during timber operations and maintaining early successional areas adjacent to wetlands is the best approach to maintaining and potentially increasing woodcock populations statewide. Population numbers can also be seriously impacted by severe storms and other climatic events during migration and nesting periods. Predation also affects woodcock, but sufficient information is lacking.

Other species benefiting from Habitat Restoration

The funding of early successional habitat in Massachusetts will not only help American woodcock, but other wildlife as well. Wildlife such as the Wood turtle, American burying beetle, Frosted Elfin and other butterflies as well as other birds such as Woodcock, Short-eared Owls, bobolinks and other grassland birds will also benefit from management activities. A mixture of herbaceous plants including native grasses, like little bluestem, and other forbs and ericads would also benefit.



Please look for this years LIP Grant announcement on October 26th

http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/habitat/grants/lip/lip_home.htm

2007-08 LIP Preview: (continued from the front page)

- Of the 39 projects selected: **14 land trusts, 8 conservation organizations, 1 sportsmen's club and 16 other private landowners.**
- Of the 39 projects: **1287 acres in coastal habitats, 537-acres in early successional upland, 82-acres in early successional wetlands, 440 acres in grasslands 19-acres in shrubland and 80-acres in Oak Savannah/Barrens.**
- Of the projects selected: **90%** of the projects had *permanent protection*, **8%** were enrolled in *Chapter 61* and **3%** had *no conservation protection*. The projects without land protection were required to sign a land covenant for **10 years** requiring the landowner to keep the project area as wildlife habitat.
- Of the projects selected: **89%** applied for manual restoration, **87%** applied for an invasive/exotic plant removal, **0%** applied for a prescribed burn and **28%** applied for the seeding or planting in their project area.
- The 2007-2008 Massachusetts LIP Projects will conserve over 2400-acres of habitat benefiting over **120 At-risk species.**



Woodcock/Grouse Project, Belchertown, MA

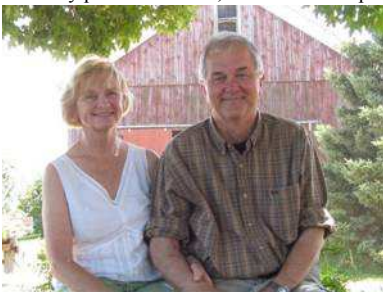
Faces of Conservation

The Value of Stewardship: Jon Liland- Traveling down a back road one day, my wife and I came upon this beautiful farm. There was a “for sale” sign on the front lawn. It was love at first sight with Maple Hill Farm. We bought it and have never looked back.

My wife Astrid and I, both physicians, came to Massachusetts to obtain five years of postgraduate training at Harvard University, she to become an anesthesiologist, I to become a head and neck surgeon. Being from Norway and used to a very active outdoor life, both summer and winter, we searched the areas surrounding Boston for outdoor opportunities. Many wonderful hiking trips in the woods surrounding the Quabbin Reservoir led to a certain familiarity with Hardwick where Maple Hill Farm is located.

The 250+ acre farm was first settled some time between 1730 and 1740. The first part of the present house was built in 1752. When New England farming was at its peak, Maple Hill Farm was established as one of the preeminent dairy farms of the area. The dairy business was so good that in 1896 that the old barn was raised 20 feet and made twice as long, to accommodate the increased herd.

Life on the farm was productive and profitable. However, the relative prosperity of New England dairy farms rapidly deteriorated over the next couple of generations. Much of the land lay fallow and unworked. Hay fields filled in with woody plants and trees, and the landscape shifted back to woodland.



For the first couple of years we used the farm as a weekend place. We moved to Hardwick full time in 1977. We continued the dairy operation for a few years, and then we changed from dairy to a herd of Scottish Highlanders. None of this was profitable, and the IRS would not allow the losses in spite of the concerted effort that was made.

We had always believed that land “ownership” is a very fleeting thing at best, and always considered “land stewardship” a better term for the thought that one should leave the place in better shape than when one found it.

I had always, even in my days in Norway been an naturalist and active in species protection, as a natural part of my hunting heritage. I guess that’s what drove me, as early as 1981, to create and maintain transitional habitats, by clearing land using bulldozers. For years we had been fighting hard to keep the multiflora rose and other invasives under control. Over the years valuable fields for grasslands birds and other species grew into an impenetrable jungle and were lost as habitat. It also quickly became clear, that much of the land had too many stones to use a tractor and a brush hog. The battle to keep the property open was being lost.

In the next 20 years we cleared what we could to keep it open. A total of about 40-acres was cleared and kept in grasslands by mowing and by judicious use of spraying with herbicides. This intensive effort resulted in a reduction of invasive species at the farm. The areas that suffered were the old pastures where the stones made management impossible.



Today, Maple Hill Farm sits at the heart of wide ranging region of open land in the Moose Brook Valley. Much of the nearby property is protected and actively managed for wildlife. The landscape is contiguous with Moose Brook Wildlife Management Area and over 350-acres of land owned by the East Quabbin Land Trust, which is mostly managed for birds. The Moose Brook Valley is listed by the Massachusetts Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area for both early successional and forest interior birds.

A few years ago, a friend who is a wildlife biologist, informed us that the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife had funding available for the kind of work that I was already trying to do. The program was called the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) and it was the beginning of a beautiful relationship.



This partnership is in its 3rd year of management. It appears that the old saying “if you build it, they will come” holds true. Bobolinks, which used to be a rare occurrence at Maple Hill Farm, are now in abundance. This year over thirty different males and at least one breeding pair were observed during mating season from a casually selected spot behind the barn. American woodcock, snipe, and a pair of upland sandpipers have been observed as well. The meadowlark’s “spring of the year” call has been heard by several people, but, alas, not seen...yet. Wood turtle, spotted turtle and coveys of partridge, not just solitary birds have been seen on a regular basis.

One of the unexpected benefits of the LIP funding we received, was that the next door neighbors, at Juniper Ledge Farm, noticed the work going on. When they were told about the LIP program and its purpose, they enthusiastically adopted the concept, applied, and are now successfully managing land on their property.

The project for Maple Hill Farm for this year consists of removing a thicket bisecting the otherwise contiguous open grasslands of Maple Hill Farm and Juniper Ledge Farm. This will have a dramatic, beneficial effect on grassland species, as the area now will have some 150 acres of contiguous grasslands. This is exponentially better than ten individual 15-acre plots

Recently, we hosted a field trip for a group from the Coverts/Keystone training given at the Harvard Forest facility in Petersham. The group came to see the habitat management occurring at the farm.

They were given a tour of the recently cleared multiflora rose thickets,



and saw how native grasses reclaimed the area and were taking hold. For us, this resulted in invaluable contacts of likeminded people for future reference and cooperation.

What does the future hold for Maple Hill Farm? Most of its 250 acres, more or less, is in a permanent Conservation Restriction held by the Trustees of Reservations (TTOR) and the East Quabbin Land Trust respectively. Our two sons, one a dedicated naturalist and mountain climber in Boulder, Colorado, the other a corporate lawyer/hobby farmer in Woodstock, Vermont, take a great interest in what is going on at Maple Hill Farm, and will have the necessary resources to keep up the work that has “only just begun”.

The Lilands are convinced that when they do a fly over in a hundred years, as they are determined to do, Maple Hill Farm and its wildlife will be in better shape than ever.

Post your Wildlife Sightings!!

Soon you will be able to post your wildlife sightings, descriptions and photographs on the LIP webpage. In the past, many of you have sent me exciting emails or photos about the wildlife that has returned to your property as a result of the LIP work you have done on the property.



We are working to add a landowner's page that will allow folks to post wildlife sightings (including tracks, scat or sounds). Folks that have the technology may submit digital photos as well (<1 MB). At the end of the LIP grant the best photo(s) will win a prize. Information will be posted on the webpage

shortly. In the mean time, things to consider are noting time of day, weather and location of wildlife. It doesn't have to be a rare species, it can be some unique behavior of a common species as well. At this point, to submit a posting, email it to the LIP Coordinator at: Ken.MacKenzie@state.ma.us.

Interested in LIP?

Contact:

Ken MacKenzie

Wildlife Biologist-LIP

MassWildlife

One Rabbit Hill Road

Westboro, MA 01581

(508) 389-6313

Ken.MacKenzie@state.ma.us

MassWildlife
Landowner Incentive Program

For more Info, log on to:

http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/habitat/grants/lip/lip_home.htm

MassWildlife's LIP Field Days

This year MassWildlife will be offering 4 LIP Field Days to prospective applicants, landowners already enrolled in LIP and curious neighbors. These projects will highlight a couple different projects across the state. The exact dates/times and details will be posted on the LIP webpage.

September 29th- Chesterfield October- Amherst

October 6th- Brimfield October- Martha's Vineyard



Kampoosa Bog Phragmites Project, Stockbridge, MA

FARMERS NEEDED TO MAKE HAY FOR WILDLIFE!

MassWildlife needs farmers to help private landowners actively manage their lands for wildlife habitat. Growers looking for more hay or pasture for their operations may be able to help create and restore grassland wildlife habitat by working with landowners enrolled in MassWildlife's Landowner Incentive Program (LIP). A number of LIP landowners who own old farm fields and meadows want to maintain the grasslands for nesting birds but don't have the expertise or equipment for mowing hay. One of the challenges grassland owners face is finding farmers to graze, cut or harvest this hay from their fields while conforming to the specific needs of wildlife. Across the state, grasslands such as meadows and fields are in decline. If left uncut, grasslands revert back to forest in a relatively short period of time. The hope is that wildlife, private landowners and farmers will benefit from these activities. Farmers looking to hay more property and who want to assist LIP project landowners can contact LIP coordinator Ken MacKenzie at Ken.MacKenzie@state.ma.us or call him at 508 389 6313.

Landowner Incentive Program Signs

Many of you have asked if we could provide you with a sign which would inform your neighbors and others know about the good work going on with your property. Well they're here.



New Landowner Incentive Program signs are available to landowners participating in the program. Signs, which are approximately 8.5 x 11 inches, are available upon request for posting on participating projects. Interested landowners should contact the LIP Program Coordinator at (508) 389-6313 or visit the Westborough Field Headquarters, at 1 Rabbit Hill Rd, Westborough, MA 01581 to pick them up.